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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: March 31, 2009

SUMMARY: Reports and photographs of the "eight-hour gun battle" in Lahore dominated front pages in all newspapers on Tuesday. Newspapers reported that at least "eight people were killed and 100 others injured after gunmen stormed a police training school." State Department spokesman Duguid's statement that "Pakistan needed immediate help for fighting terrorists" also figured prominently. All dailies reported that "a new group of militants calling itself Fidayeen-e-Islam" claimed responsibility for the attack. Statement by a government adviser that "Baitullah Mehsood was involved in the Lahore incident" also garnered wide coverage. Newspapers also highlighted the white paper released after the launching of new Af-Pak policy calling for "building a stable civilian government and a vibrant economy." Also front-paged were reports that "five security personnel and two civilians were killed" when their convoy was hit by a bomb on Bannu-Miramshah road.

All major dailies ran editorials on the terrorism incident in Lahore. The English daily, "Dawn," underlined the need for hammering out a "political and social consensus on this issue." Another English daily, "The Nation," noted that "the terrorists have succeeded in sending the message that no part of the country is beyond their reach." The second largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt" wrote: "If independent investigation proves involvement of Uzbek or Afghan elements in the Manawan tragedy then we need to ponder over the utility of having animosity with those whom even America could not defeat." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Eight-Hour Gunbattle" "The Nation" (03/31)

"Terror hit Lahore second time in a month when heavily armed men, numbering about 10, took hold of the Manawan Police training centre in an eight-hour long gun-battle which climaxed into the killing of eight policemen and capturing alive of 4 terrorists on Monday morning. Above 90 other policemen were also injured in the attack."

"Terror Overpowered For Once" "Dawn" (03/31)

"At least eight people were killed and 100 others injured after gunmen stormed a police training school in the outskirts of Lahore on Monday morning and started shooting indiscriminately. Army and security personnel overpowered the attackers, after nearly eight hours of siege, at 3.30 p.m."

"President, PM Strongly Condemn Police Academy Attack" "The News"

(03/31)

"President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Monday strongly condemned the attack by unknown gunmen at a police training centre in Lahore that killed several people. They directed the authorities concerned to investigate the matter take immediate steps to control the situation."

"US, UK, India Slam Terror Hit" "The News" (03/31)

"The US, the UK and India condemned the terrorist attack on police training school in Lahore."

"Pakistan Needs Help To Fight Terror: US" "Dawn" (03/31)

"The United States said on Monday that the attack on a police training institute near Lahore showed that Pakistan needed immediate help for fighting terrorists. "One thing that is evident is that Pakistan needs our help and international support in fighting terrorism," said US State Department's assistant spokesman Gordon Duguid when asked for comments on the Manawan terrorist attack."

"New Group Claims Responsibility" "The News" (03/31)

"A new group of militants calling itself Fidayaan-e-Islam claimed responsibility of the attack on police training centre in Manawan in Lahore and last Friday bombing of the mosque in Bhigiyari near Jamrud in Khyber agency and threatened more attacks if the government did not stop military operations in tribal area."

"Mehsud Behind Strike: Malik" "The Nation" (03/31)

"Advisor to Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik has said Bait Ullah Mehsud sent the terrorists from Waziristan and the attack on the Police Training Centre Manawan was also planned there. He said foreign hand in the terrorist attack could not be ruled out but so far there was not such evidence."

"Lahore Attack Part Of TTP Campaign" "The News" (03/31)

"Monday's terrorist attack on the Manawa Police Training School in Lahore was part of the pressure tactics used by the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), led by Baitullah Mehsud, to secure release of eight of its militants arrested after the assault on the Sri Lankan cricket team earlier this month."

"US Sets Lofty Goals For Pakistan In New Strategy" "Dawn" (03/31)

"Building a stable civilian government and a vibrant economy are two of the main goals of the new US strategy for Pakistan, says a white paper released after the launching of the new policy."

"Kyani To Discuss AfPak Policy With Holbrooke, Mullen" "The Nation" (03/31)

"Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Kyani would discuss the new US Afghanistan- Pakistan policy when he meets a high level US delegation in Islamabad next week."

"Five Troops Killed In Bomb Attack" "Dawn" (03/31)

"Five security personnel and two civilians were killed and 12 others injured when their convoy was hit by a bomb on Bannu-Miramshah road on Monday morning."

"Terrorists Hiding In FATA Planning Attacks: Holbrooke" "Daily Times" (03/31)

"US special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on Monday said terrorists hiding in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were planning further attacks on the West. 'I want to underscore that we are in the region collectively because there are men in the region who pose a direct threat to countries and cities in the US and Europe,' Richard Holbrooke told reporters in The Hague."

"Qaeda, Taliban Planning 9/11-Like Attacks In US, Europe: NWFP IG" "Daily Times" (03/31)

"Al Qaeda and Taliban are planning to stage terrorist strikes

similar to the 9/11 attacks in the US and Europe, NWFP police chief Malik Navid told the National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior on Monday."

"Hundreds Of Taliban From Swat, Bajaur Enter Dir" "Dawn" (03/31)

"Hundreds of Taliban hailing from swat and Bajaur have recently shifted to parts of Dir where a possible showdown with security forces is likely, sources said."

"Polio Vaccination, Girls' Education Not Banned In Swat: Taliban" "Daily Times" (03/31)

"No ban has been imposed on anti-polio campaign or girls' education in the Swat valley, Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said on Monday. 'We have not imposed any ban on anti-polio vaccination. Parents are free to administer anti-polio drops to their children below five years of age,' Khan told reporters. He said the Taliban were not against girls' education but stressed that all female students should adopt veil in accordance with the teachings of Islam."

"NWFP Wants Donors To Continue Relief Efforts" "The News" (03/31)

"The NWFP government has asked all the donor agencies to continue their relief operations for the internally displaced persons from Bajaur and Swat district until a proper arrangement for their return to homes formulated. The appeal was made at a meeting relating to the welfare of IDPs of troubled areas of Fata and NWFP, held at Afghan Refugees Commissionerate, Peshawar, on Monday."

"UN Aid For Afghan Refugees Set To Resume" "Dawn" (03/31)

"Afghan refugees in Pakistan seeking to return to their home country will receive a boost when the United Nations resumes its voluntary repatriation program this week, the UN announced on Monday."

"India Eyes Role In Obama Strategy" "Dawn" (03/31)

"India on Monday welcomed the new US strategy to fight terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan even as New Delhi sought a role in the arriving campaign as a 'responsible power' with a stake in defeating extremism. In a separate statement on the attack on Lahore's police academy on Monday, Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon offered condolences to the bereaved families and described terrorism as a menace to the entire region."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Pakistan Under Attack," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

". . . The militants involved in Monday's siege may have been overcome but it is time to hammer out a political and social consensus on this issue. The country's mainstream political parties need to draw a line in the sand and show the people, with no room for ambiguity, where they stand in this battle for the soul of Pakistan. The religio-political parties must also make their positions clear. President Obama says that US ground forces will not enter Pakistan. We would be well advised to not give them the chance. If we can't do the job ourselves, others might do it for us. And that way lies disaster."

"A Grisly Attack," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/31)

"The terrorists have succeeded in sending the message that no part of the country is beyond their reach and that they can even attack the establishments and personnel of the law enforcement agencies with impunity. . . A major reason behind the success of the terrorists is the unending politicking, the imposition of Governor's rule in Punjab being the latest example."

"Manawan Tragedy: The Need For Strong Action Against Perpetrators," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/31)

"If the government and its institutions are incapable of overpowering a few terrorists then what is the need of jeopardizing Pakistan for just \$ 1.5 billion. If independent investigation proves involvement of Uzbek or Afghan elements in the Manawan tragedy then we need to ponder over the utility of having animosity with those whom even America could not defeat. Isn't it better that we stop fighting American war and pay attention to our internal cohesion, security and law and order."

"Police Targeted At Manawan," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/31)

". . . One must wait for the final verdict when investigation into the attack at Manawan is concluded, but the footprint of the TTP is quite clear on the basis of past record. Just as President Asif Zardari announced a beefing up of the police in all the provinces, the message from the terrorists is: don't join the police and those who are already employed should resign and go home. This should be read together with the widely accepted observation that terrorism is best countered by the police and not the army."

"Another Outrage," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

". . . We need a drastic change in our approach to terrorism and militancy. Our entire security strategy needs to change. We need to assess the status of our intelligence apparatus. Our allies must assist in this. It appears that full advantage of the offers to extend this training was not taken in the wake of the events of 9/11. We must face up to the fact that well organized militant outfits exist in our midst. They have established many inter-connections and unparalleled expertise. The use of 15 or more attackers at Manawan shows their growing capacity and high motivation."

"Accountability Of Assistance And Pakistan's Economic Problems," an editorial note in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (06/24)

"Reacting to President Obama's statement, a Foreign Office spokesman has said that it is not possible to keep a record of the assistance in the war on terror. Pakistan's stance on the issue is correct and principled.... It is unfortunate that the U.S. terms Pakistan a key ally in the war on terror, yet it has done nothing to get Pakistan out of its financial crisis. U.S. authorities cannot deny the fact that it is due to these [terrorist] acts that its domestic and foreign investments have gone down."

"New Afghan Policy & Fata Politics," an op-ed by Syed Irfan Ashraf & Shaukat " in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

"Predictably, Obama's new strategy, if followed, would lead to a war in Pakhtun lands where an organized culture of militancy is ready to tackle the enemy. The US needs to reflect on the policy before implementing it in Afghanistan. Eight years in Afghanistan has brought them no gains and they will not make any from a new misadventure. There will be only bloodshed and misery as there is no exit from this deadly war theatre. At least, that is what history has taught us so far."

"Obama's Policy Review," an op-ed by Masood Sharif Khan Khattak in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

"President Obama said: 'To avoid the mistakes of the past, we must make clear that our relationship with Pakistan is grounded in support for Pakistan's democratic institutions and the Pakistani people.' These words have been very heartening because Pakistanis by and large have had this as the biggest impediment in the US-Pakistan relations. . . If the US truly wants to stand for a lasting opportunity then the 1.5 billion dollars aid to Pakistan every year must be exclusively, repeat exclusively, spent on development projects only in the NWFP, FATA and Balochistan. A foreseeable adverse situation in Balochistan needs to be averted. Obama himself said: 'But make no mistake: Our efforts will fail in Afghanistan and Pakistan if we don't invest in their future.'"

"Obama's Address," an op-ed by Dr Rashid Ahmad Khan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000)

(03/31)

"The new US strategy on Afghanistan has been welcomed in Islamabad as well as in Kabul. President Zardari and PM Gilani have termed the new US strategy as a vindication of Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan based on regional approach and combining political methods with military means to end the Taliban insurgency. But the new strategy also puts much greater responsibility on Pakistan as with the increased economic and military assistance from the US, Pakistan would be required to do more."

"Better Wake Up Sirs, And Fast," an Op-ed by Kamran Shafi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

"Pakistan must demonstrate its commitment to rooting out Al Qaeda and the violent extremists within its borders ... we will insist that action be taken - one way or another [are you listening, sir?] - When we have intelligence about high-level terrorist targets, said President Obama. Chilling words, what! Sure enough, the very next day our FO came out with a mealy-mouthed response to the American president's speech, to the effect that Pakistan would inform the US about its concerns 'in due course' . . . We Pakistanis must stop living in denial forthwith if this country is to survive. We must take head-on the terrorist/extremist/Al Qaeda menace if we are to leave our succeeding generations a country half worth living in. We must stand up collectively as the great nation we are and say to those that engineer situations to suit their own institutional needs and wants that enough is enough."

"No Compromise On National Sovereignty" an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/31)  
"It is also a fact that the graph of foreign interference in our country has touched such heights that no one can deny it. Even the thought of such interference in another independent, sovereign country cannot be entertained. Our rulers give assurances that drone attacks will not recur, yet at the same time, following strikes in FATA, U.S. drones have started targeting areas in NWFP at will. It seems as if the U.S. considers Pakistan an American colony. In this context, the first thing is to ensure protection of our sovereignty and independence."

"Announcement Not To Violate Pakistan's Borders," an editorial note in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (03/31)  
"In an interview with CBS, President Barack Obama rejected the possibility of sending U.S. forces inside Pakistan.... We welcome President Obama decision of respecting Pakistan territorial sovereignty. It is also necessary that instead of hitting your head against rocky Afghanistan hills a political dialogue with people's representatives is initiated, in order to end three-decade long bloody war in that country."

"How Far Can US Push Pakistan?" an op-ed by Muhammad Bilal in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/31)

". . . But for Pakistan's security establishment, India's presence in Afghanistan, Kabul's refusal to recognize the border and the festering Kashmir dispute are greater strategic threats. 'The concept of pressuring Pakistan is flawed,' Ahmed Rashid and Barnett Rubin have written in the Foreign Affairs magazine. 'No state can be successfully pressured into acts it considers suicidal.' America's leverage is thus limited: in pushing too much, it may lose even the limited cooperation it has."

"US Message To Pakistan," an op-ed by Israr-ul-haque in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/31)

". . . Why can't the US/NATO with the help of the electronic system of surveillance at their disposal and with their drones flying freely all over the tribal areas find the safe havens located in FATA. . . In case the US drone and missile attacks were actually hitting the safe havens and the militants, the fighting by them in Swat and other tribal areas would have by now petered out. But in fact the militant's operations with the passage of time are gathering momentum. . . This shows that the Taliban have their supporters in the Afghan army and the police as well. President Obama would therefore do well to rethink his regional approach and based on it his new military strategy."

"Going Astray," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/31)

". . . True, it would be an exercise in futility to doubt the sincerity of the US towards Pakistan which it rightly considers a front-line state, but at the same time it should also understand the difficulties Pakistan is facing, foremost among them being the fallout of the US war in Afghanistan and the spate of drone attacks in the tribal areas, which have generated a severe backlash among the tribal population. As recent reports indicate, the US is considering extending the drone attacks to Balochistan, including the provincial capital of Quetta, that will have serious repercussions for the security of the country. Rather than making Pakistan a scapegoat, the US government must remind itself that its top priority is restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan."

"Swat Muddle Over Sharia," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/31)

"The Chief of Tehreek-e Nifaz-e Shariat-e Muhammadi (TNSM), Sufi Muhammad, has warned of unrest in the Swat Valley if President Asif Zardari does not approve the Nizam-e Adl Regulation of 2009. . . The President is understandably hesitant to sign the Nizam-e Adl law because of the way the sharia in Swat has been envisaged . . . The other 'truth' that one must recognize is the consequences of negotiating peace with the terrorists from a position of weakness. The NWFP government did not engage in talks with Sufi Muhammad because it was keen to abandon Swat to him; it was compelled to do so because of the target-killing of ANP leaders and the failure of the security forces to stem the growing power of the TTP in the region. . . Swat is just one example of what will happen if the state decides to seek peace with the Taliban-Al Qaeda combine from a position of weakness."

"The 'Am-Brit' Mess" an op-ed by Ahmed Quraishi in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

"You have to give it to the American propaganda machine. U.S. officials and America's long list of self-styled 'Pakistan experts' are advising Islamabad to stop meddling in Afghanistan. But it is kosher for the U.S. military to travel half the world to occupy Afghanistan and that's not meddling. Well guess what, Pakistan has more pressing interests as a next door neighbor of Afghanistan and it will protect its interests. Who says CIA's interests in Afghanistan are more sacred than ISI's. . . Washington and its list of 'Af-Pak' experts should stop treating our region as a laboratory for their strategic experiments. Instead of toying with silly ideas like backing 'secular Pashtuns' against the Taliban, the Americans can diffuse the entire tension in our region by sharing power with the Pashtuns in Kabul instead of the motley crew of Karzai, the drug lords and the assortment of former communist officials who sit in key offices today. This American-British mess - the 'Am-Brit' - is the reason why Pakistan's entire western regions are disturbed today and there are those busy 'convincing' us that the 'Am-Brit' scheme of things is the best option for us. The question is: Whose side our government is on?"

"Setback Amid Progress In Iraq" an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/31)

". . . It is the duty of the government in Baghdad and those outside it to help restore normality so that the withdrawal of American troops at the end of 2010 does not lead to a new era of anarchy. All sides should ensure that the general election scheduled towards the end of this year is peaceful."

Patterson